

THE MASTER-ESSAYIST

'T'aymeroy micuk m'entendre bien en
moy qu*en Ciceron/

JL our hundred years have passed since
Montaigne was
born. It is hard to realise that this adorer of
the Ancients
is already becoming so ancient himself He
remains so
modern—the first modern man, more
advanced in many
ways than this distracted world we live in,
which only too
closely resembles his in its fanaticism and
brutality, and
has so much still to learn from him. Today
he seems
nearer to us in mind than Shakespeare, who
was younger
and is as immortal; than Rousseau, who
imitated his ideas
and his self-revelations two centuries later;
than our own
grandparents. Generations have peered over
Montaigne's
shoulder into the little mirror where he
studied himself,
to find their own features looking back at
them; genera-
tions to come, for whom the most flashing
novelties of
1933 have grown dull and rusty, will bend
over that
mirror still. That a gaily self-indulgent old
gentleman
in Perigord once loved scratching his ears is
and will be
remembered where lives, by the thousand,
of desperate
industry and devoted idealism leave not a
ripple on the
inky waters of oblivion. Such is justice. He
would have
been the first to smile at the irony of it.
And yet it is
not unreasonable. Montaigne has done more
to civilise
Europe by quietly recording what he was,

than they by
 all they do. That quiet voice has filled our
 whole world
 with echoes. They meet us, disguised, in
Hamlet and
Measure for Measure and *The Tempest*.
 Webster wove its
 sentences into his bitter verse. Ben Jonson
 remarked in
 verse as bitter how good Montaigne was to
 steal from.
 Bacon followed in his tracks (Montaigne had
 been familiar